

TOPIC: RECOMMEND APPROVAL OF BACHELOR OF FINE ARTS DEGREES IN THEATRE ARTS AND DANCE AT COLORADO MESA UNIVERSITY

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I. SUMMARY

This consent item recommends approval for Colorado Mesa University (CMU) to offer two Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) degrees; one in Theatre Arts and another in Dance.

II. BACKGROUND

COMMISSION AUTHORITY

The Colorado Commission on Higher Education's role and responsibility in the review and approval of new academic programs at institutions operating under a performance contract is defined in §23-5-129(6)(b), which states that new and modified program proposals shall be reviewed and approved only on the basis of fit with the institution's statutory role and mission.

III. STAFF ANALYSIS

OVERVIEW OF PROPOSED PROGRAM

The following is summarized from CMU's proposal:

BFA Theatre Arts

A graduate with a B.F.A. possesses a solid foundation for a life's work as an artist in the theatre, and the program faculty is committed to the philosophy of training theatrical entrepreneurs. Ultimately, the degree prepares young theatre professionals who are ready to work or attend graduate school after graduation. According to the *Handbook* of the National Association of Schools of Theatre, "Students enrolled in professional undergraduate degrees in theatre are expected to develop the knowledge, skills, concepts, and sensitivities essential to the life of the theatre professional. In any of many possible roles, the theatre professional must exhibit not only technical competence, but also broad knowledge of theatre, sensitivity to artistic style, and an insight into the role of theatre in the life of humankind."

BFA Dance

Focusing on commercial dance, the B.F.A. in Dance is designed to prepare students to meet the rigorous demands of a professional dance career and provide a strong foundation and practical experience for future choreographers and studio teachers.

Beginning with the first semester, students enroll in technique courses taught by academically and professionally experienced faculty. In technique courses, students are exposed to techniques and approaches that are industry standards today. The program offers beginning through professional-level technique classes in ballet, jazz, modern, and tap and also offers two levels of study in Hip Hop. This breadth – not found in other Colorado Dance programs – in addition to courses in Dance History, Pedagogy, Choreography, Music Analysis, and Dancer Wellness, prepares students who are ready for the rigors of the professional world. Unlike larger institutions, performance opportunities in all CMU productions are open to motivated and talented freshmen.

Additional information on these proposed degrees, unrelated to fit with statutory role and mission, is in Appendix A.

ROLE AND MISSION SUPPORT

This degree supports CMU's statutory role and mission, which states:

There is hereby established a university at Grand Junction, to be known as Colorado Mesa University, which shall be a general baccalaureate and graduate institution with selective admission standards. Colorado Mesa University shall offer liberal arts and sciences, professional, and technical degree programs and a limited number of graduate programs. Colorado Mesa University shall also maintain a community college role and mission, including career and technical education programs. Colorado Mesa University shall receive resident credit for two-year course offerings in its commission-approved service area. Colorado Mesa University shall also serve as a regional education provider. [§23-53-101, C.R.S.]

Pursuant to Colorado Revised Statutes 23-5-129(6)(b), department staff finds that CMU's proposed Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) degrees in Theatre Arts and Dance are consistent with the institution's statutory role and mission, meet gtPathways requirements and comply with the 120 credit cap for baccalaureate degrees. CMU's Board of Trustees approved the programs at its March 19, 2015 meeting.

IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Commission approve the Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) degrees in Theatre Arts and Dance at Colorado Mesa University.

STATUTORY AUTHORITY

C.R.S. §23-5-129 Governing boards - performance contract - authorization – operations

(6) While operating pursuant to a performance contract negotiated pursuant to this section, the governing board of a state institution of higher education:

(b) Need not consult with nor obtain approval from the Colorado commission on higher education to create, modify, or eliminate academic and vocational programs offered by the institution, so long as such creations, modifications, and eliminations are consistent with the institution's statutory role and mission. Institutions shall submit information to the department demonstrating that the creation or modification of an academic or career and technical education program is consistent with the institution's statutory role and mission. The Colorado commission on higher education shall have the authority to override the creation or modification of an academic or vocational program if the change made by the governing board is inconsistent with the institution's statutory role and mission.

APPENDIX:

Appendix A: Supplemental Information

APPENDIX A: SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION

This supplemental information is unrelated to the proposed degree's fit with the institution's statutory role and mission. The following is summarized from the institution's proposal:

EVIDENCE OF NEED

As they reviewed the curricula over the past year, Theatre Arts faculty members found that the Acting/Directing and Music Theatre concentrations had become more closely aligned with expectations of a Bachelor of Fine Arts (B.F.A.) degree in Theatre Arts, as defined by the National Association of Schools of Theatre. Similarly, when faculty members compared CMU's dance curriculum with that at peer institutions, they found that the Dance concentration was more appropriately associated with the B.F.A. degree. No other peer institutions offer a B.F.A., Theatre Arts, with a concentration in Dance, and the National Association of Schools of Theatre does not recognize a degree structured as CMU's current configuration. This is particularly significant in that CMU's dance program focuses primarily on commercial dance – unique in Colorado – and its intent is to place graduating seniors in musical theatre productions, on cruise ships, in music videos, and in the large dance shows of Las Vegas and Branson.

As for enrollments, the Department expects a significant increase in numbers with the advent of the B.F.A., building on the 20-30 students already in the program. This expectation is largely due to the:

- a) professional nature of the degree's title;
- b) clear preference of dancers and dance training programs for the B.F.A; and
- c) confusing title of the current B.A. in Theatre Arts at CMU in which Dance currently is a concentration rather than the major.

High school students entering these areas, in particular, often find the B.F.A. degree more desirable. Enrollments in each of the current concentrations have fluctuated between 35 and 50 students for each of the last five academic years.

DUPLICATION

Department staff confirms the following similarly named degrees at Colorado's public four-year institutions:

- a) BFA Dance at University of Colorado Boulder
- b) BFA Theatre at MSU Denver
- c) BFA Theatre at University of Colorado Boulder
- d) BFA Theatre, Film & Television at University of Colorado Denver